



*“Churches everywhere are hungry for spiritual and worship renewal in the face of social and political change”*



(Photo: © 2011 Cindy de Jong)

## Discover the joy of worship renewal

By Paul Detterman

Every so often, a resource comes along that just makes you smile. If you have not yet taken the opportunity to read and study the new document entitled *Worshiping the Triune God: Receiving and Sharing Wisdom across Continents and Centuries* get ready to smile!

This inspiring document, designed to present a vision for the renewal of worship and spiritual practice in parishes, is written in the style of biblical beatitudes and proverbs. For example:

*Blessed are communities in which hospitality is practiced in both public worship and in personal lives, where strangers and guests are wel-*

*comed and embraced, where the poor and marginalized, diseased and forsaken can find refuge under the shadow of God’s wings. (V. 5.3)*

To help you get into the spirit of the process of worship renewal and smile, *Reformed Worship* [and now *Reformed Communiqué*] offers this article and another on page 3. We hope to entice you and your worship leadership team to become personally invested in the ongoing global conversation this document has begun and to discover how your local Lord’s Day celebration intersects, informs, and impacts the worship, witness, and mission of brothers and sisters in Christ around the globe.

When the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) was formed last June out of two predecessor organizations – the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) – worship was one of the nine areas identified as “ways the WCRC could be of service to the larger Church of Jesus Christ”. WCRC believes that the worship of God’s people impacts the other eight areas of WCRC’s focus: Reformed Identity, Theology, and Communion; Christian Unity and Ecumenical Engagement; Justice in the Economy, the Earth and All God’s Creation; Leadership Development and Nurture; Gender

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Justice; Youth Empowerment; Mission; and Working for Peace and Reconciliation.

Approved unanimously by delegates from around the world who participated face-to-face at the founding assembly for the new organization, the document also reflects the points of view of many more voices that were heard through information and insight gathered by the research arm of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship in Grand

Rapids. For more about the story of how the resource was created, see *Wanting to renew...* on page 3.

The result: people from very different settings identified surprisingly common convictions, concerns, and practices. The document has been translated into several languages to date, with additional translations planned. But this is far from a static declaration emerging from completed research, past conversations, or a one-time “birthing” event. As the verbs in the subtitle suggest, this document is our invitation into a deep, rich, ongoing conversation.

To personally engage in this conversation, please read *Worshiping the Triune God* together with others with whom you pray and plan worship. It is available at [www.wcrc.ch](http://www.wcrc.ch) or from [wcrc@wcrc.ch](mailto:wcrc@wcrc.ch) After you’ve smiled, consider how you can most effectively participate in this amazing global dialogue.

*Paul Detterman serves as executive director of Presbyterians for Renewal in Louisville, Kentucky.*

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## Wanting to renew your congregation’s worship practices? Read on!

*By Emily R. Brink*

What worship issues or needs are of most concern in your church? This question was posed in a questionnaire sent by our worship institute in the United States to Reformed churches around the world in 2008.

Responses from 13 countries in six regions were submitted in reply to the questionnaire distributed by the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, United States prior to the meeting of the Uniting General Council (UGC) in that city in June 2010.

Results of the survey showed that churches everywhere are hungry for spiritual and worship renewal in the face of unprecedented social and political change, with more immigration and more refugees than ever before. Such worship renewal needs to be rooted not only in a theology of worship, but also in the practice of worship as it is expressed in increasingly diverse ways within and among congregations everywhere. Today social networking allows us to listen and learn from brothers and sisters in Christ around the world. It is this global perspective that gave

rise to *Worshiping the Triune God: Receiving and Sharing Wisdom across Continents and Centuries*, a document for worship planners that is a remarkable gift from and to churches around the world.

Calvin College in Grand Rapids, United States. How fitting that worship and spiritual renewal were an important part of the agenda at the birth of this new communion! (See Discover the joy page 1.)



*Worship planners create vision for renewal of worship in parishes. (Photo: Doug Goodwin)*

Hearing from churches around the world was an important step in a process that resulted in the adoption of *Worshiping the Triune God* at the first assembly of the World Communion of Reformed Churches held in June 2010 at

However, creating a document on worship and spiritual renewal from the responses to the questionnaire proved to be a difficult task. The committee charged with the task wrestled to find an approach that wasn’t steeped in a Western rational

academic approach of lists of principles with do's and don'ts. The breakthrough came when the committee looked at the concept of proverbs—statements of wisdom imbedded in many cultures around the world in all ages, from the biblical book of Proverbs to our own day. As specific proverbs were suggested, committee members offered testimonies of application from their own cultures. I reviewed my notes from travels to different churches; how about adding testimonies about psalm singing

in Pakistan, for example? We began dreaming of a whole gallery of educational resources that could be posted online, including videos of services in different lands that exemplified how the wisdom in a particular proverb was practiced in different places.

The revised document, “Worshiping the Triune God,” was adopted unanimously by the WCRC and commended to member churches for study and reflection. It promises to serve as a catalyst for ongoing learning and sharing

among member churches, a means by which we can encourage each other to “grow in grace and knowledge in the Lord Jesus”. To read the document online visit [www.wcrc.ch](http://www.wcrc.ch)

*Emily R. Brink is a senior research fellow for the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship.*

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## Calvin Symposium on Worship The Psalms: When life is prayer – January 26-28, 2012

*You may wish to attend the annual Calvin Symposium on Worship, a three-day conference sponsored by the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship and the Center for Excellence in Preaching in Grand Rapids, United States. The theme for the 2012 symposium is “The Psalms: When life is prayer”.*

*This ecumenical conference brings together a wide audience of pastors, worship leaders and planners, artists, musicians, scholars, and students from around the world. It is a time fellowship, worship, and learning, seeking to deepen and integrate all aspects of worship and renew commitment to the full ministry of the church.*

*For information visit <http://worship.calvin.edu/symposium/>*

## Celebrating Wesley Granberg-Michaelson

Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, a well-known American ecumenist, has retired as general secretary of the Reformed Church of America (RCA) after 17 years in the role.

At a celebration of Granberg-Michaelson's service to the church during the RCA Synod meeting in June, the general secretary of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), Setri Nyomi, offered a tribute “from the heart”.

Nyomi told the gathering of church leaders and ecumenical guests in Grand Rapids, United States, that Granberg-Michaelson had been instrumental in the creation of the WCRC by encouraging the Christian Reformed Church of North America to join in the merger between the Reformed



*Wesley Granberg-Michaelson is praised for his commitment to global ecumenism. (Photo: Jon Lundstrum)*

Ecumenical Council and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. The merger launched the WCRC during the Uniting General Council in Grand Rapids in June 2010.

In his remarks Nyomi referred to Granberg-Michaelson as “a church leader with a passion for

the wider Reformed family and for ecumenical engagement”.

“Wes has long been active in the big issues of Christianity unity, seeking new models of bringing those to the ecumenical table that are not yet there such as the Christian Churches Together in the United States and the Global Christian Forum at the global level,” Nyomi said. “He also has a passion for challenging ecumenical organizations to operate from the Global South.”

In response to the tributes, Granberg-Michaelson expressed his gratitude and quoted Oscar Romero, a martyr from El Salvador: “We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future that is not our own”.

*With files from RCA Today*

# WCRC builds on five key concepts

**The future for the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) is based on five key concepts: Mission, Communion, Justice, Theology, and Ecumenical Engagement.**

**A strategic plan adopted by WCRC's Executive Committee in May charts a course for the organization leading to its next General Council in 2017 that focuses on those five terms. What do they mean for your church community?**

**In a five-part series *Reformed Communiqué* will explore these concepts. Think of it as a shorthand guide to the plans for our global family in the years ahead. We hope that you and your church community will find inspiration in these key words and that you will join with WCRC in putting the concepts into action!**

**The first key concept in the series is MISSION.**

Our understanding of mission has changed over the past 100 years. Our grandparents believed mission involved converting people in far-away countries to Christianity while serving as ministers, doctors, nurses, teachers and agriculturalists. Mission

in the 21st century still involves crossing borders. But today borders are understood to be the barriers that separate people from one another. In this context, the best kind of mission is when the gospel message of love and support is shared with respect,

sensitivity, understanding and humility in relation to peoples of other faiths, belief systems and contexts.

In the years ahead, WCRC will act as a catalyst for enabling its member churches to respond to changes around them and to the challenges of the world in which we live. In view of this, WCRC is identifying resources to ensure that mission is retained at the heart of WCRC's structures and programmes.

You are invited to reflect with others in your church and with your ecumenical and interfaith partners about how best to be God's mission agents in your community.

For information about WCRC's mission work visit [wrcr@wrcr.ch](mailto:wrcr@wrcr.ch)

*The best kind of mission is when the gospel message of love and support is shared with respect.*

## North American synods meet in joint session

For the first time ever, the Reformed Church in America (RCA) and the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) have held a joint session of their respective synods.

Timing for the event 16 June was perfect because the RCA synod began as the CRC synod wrapped up, and both met at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan in the north-central United States.

"Steps have been slowly coming together since first we went apart," said James Dekker, president of the CRC synod. The RCA and the CRC separated in 1857 but in recent years have been working together in several ways.

"This is like a family reunion at long last," said Joel Boot, interim director of the CRC. "We celebrate the fact that we are



*Delegates celebration at joint meeting of Reformed church synods in North America. (Photo: Karen Huttenga, The Banner)*

closer now than we have been since 1857. For the glory of God and the good of the church and the world, I give thanks to God."

Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, retiring general secretary of the RCA, pointed out a few distinctions between the denominations: "You (the CRC) are very cohesive—you put your mind to something and get it done. . . The RCA is more diverse and has a deep ecumenical involvement."

Rev. Setri Nyomi, general secretary of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, gave closing remarks.

"The world is hungry for models of healing and reconciliation," Nyomi said. "We pray that the RCA and the CRC will be one so that the world may believe the Lord Jesus Christ, whom we all serve."

# Partnership Fund

## *Women in Rwanda: coming together for peace*

By Antoinette Berkouwer

Tumekutana is a Kiswahili word meaning “We have come together”. The name was chosen by a group of African woman leaders who came together for the first time in 2004 in Nairobi in Kenya. In October this year, a group of about 75 women will meet again, this time in the Presbyterian Church in Kigali, Rwanda, the host of the conference.

committed to justice, peace, healing and reconciliation and to working together in their own regions to advocate and lobby for these issues.

It is necessary to create a safe space where women can speak freely about the violence they see around them and even experience themselves: a space where they can talk about the effect violence has on the lives of women and children.

This will be an opportunity to discuss the situation and explore what can be done to help restore peace as there is still a need to deal with the consequences of the genocide today.

Participants will draw up recommendations from what they learn in order to implement these learnings in their own areas and countries. An ongoing forum will be created for interaction and

*... creating a network of African woman leaders committed to justice*



*African women are gathering in Rwanda to form leadership network (Photo courtesy of Tumekutana)*

Organizers have chosen the theme: “Woman as agents of justice, peace, healing and reconciliation”. They hope discussions will help create a clear picture of participants’ situations and what possible roles women can play in society. Objectives for the conference include creating a membership organization, giving a more permanent status to the women’s group and finding funds to meet every four years.

The goal is to create a network of African woman leaders who are

Organizers want the conference participants to learn from each other about how to cope with these situations and how to support others by being strong leaders. They want women to be able to live out justice and help restore peace in the areas and countries they live in.

A visit to one of Rwanda’s genocide memorial sites is planned. After the visit participants will listen to the stories of the devastating consequences of violence and conflict that Rwanda’s people have suffered.

exchange of programmes and ideas to help each other be strong women in difficult situations.

WCRC’s Partnership Fund will give €2,400 (USD3,500) to make this conference possible.

*Applications for funding endorsed by WCRC member churches are welcome. For information about how to apply for a grant from WCRC’s Partnership Fund visit [www.wcrc.ch](http://www.wcrc.ch) or send a message to [partnership@wcr.ch](mailto:partnership@wcr.ch)*

# “I was in prison and you visited me”

Refugees and immigrants seeking protection and safety from persecution in their home countries often find their arrival to the United States' border rather traumatizing, opposed to a blessing or miracle, say church human rights advocates.

is involved is a joint initiative with the Presbyterian Church (USA).

The objective of this ecumenical programme is to raise awareness among Lutheran and Presbyterian churches about the practice of arbitrary detention in the United

support as they transition into a new life and make their way in a new country. We're creating mechanisms for church folk to engage in their mission to welcome the stranger and provide hospitality to those in need.”

The Australia-based International Detention Coalition (IDC) links LIRS and other groups worldwide who share common concerns for the rights of people forced to migrate due to violence, persecution, climate change or economic adversity in their home countries. IDC models inspired LIRS. Now the U.S.-based organization hopes that the Lutheran and Reformed global families will spread the news of what church people can do to support asylum seekers while they are in detention and upon release.

During a recent trip to Geneva, Vélez took time from meetings at the United Nations Commission for Human Rights (UNCHR) to brief the general secretary of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), Setri Nyomi, on the programme. Her objective is to create links between WCRC member churches and advocates for migrant rights around the world.

“There is minimal co-ordinated effort among churches on this issue,” says Vélez. “Can WCRC become the faith umbrella for church-based initiatives worldwide?”

“We must take seriously what Jesus says in Matthew 25. ‘I was in prison and you visited me,’” Nyomi says.

The general secretary says WCRC's role is to share good models such as those in Australia and the United States. “That is consistent with WCRC's new strategic plan that favours inter- and intra-regional sharing amongst member churches.”

See also LIRS [www.lirs.org/dignity](http://www.lirs.org/dignity) and IDC <http://idcoalition.org/>



*People seeking asylum in the United States can be detained until their case is decided. (Photo: LIRS stock photo)*

People seeking asylum in the United States are often held in detention until the federal court has decided the outcome of their case. If they are refused the right to stay, they are deported. If they are granted asylum, they are released and left to fend for themselves.

“Every week we hear stories of refugee claimants whose request to stay in the United States has been granted and who are then dropped at a bus station with no place to go,” says Leslie Vélez of the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS). “They have no money, no directions, no-one to contact.”

The Colombian-born lawyer was speaking in a phone interview with *Reformed Communiqué* from the LIRS offices in Baltimore in the eastern United States in July. Vélez has a passion for human rights and belief in ecumenical collaboration. One of the projects in which she

States and form stronger links between detained asylum seekers and local church people.

“We encourage people to visit immigration detention centres,” Vélez says. “Loneliness and depression are big problems. Often the only people detainees see are their lawyers.”

Vélez's colleague, Anna Campbell, National Network Coordinator with LIRS and PCUSA, says that once links are created, church people often become advocates for the rights of the person they have befriended and continue to assist them once they are released.

“Through this joint programme, LIRS and PC(USA) are arranging for church people to welcome individuals as they are released from detention and offer support on a variety of levels,” says Campbell. “Some only need a place to rest for one night, while others need ongoing

# Global Institute of Theology 2012

By Douwe Visser

The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) will hold its third Global Institute of Theology (GIT) in Indonesia, 8 June – 1 July 2012. The Institute will be held in collaboration with, and under the academic auspices of, Duta Wacana Christian University, Yogyakarta, on the island of Java.

The purpose of the GIT is to give theological students and faculty from all over the world the opportunity to learn, teach and do theology in an intercontextual and ecumenical way by situating the theological task in local, regional and world contexts.

The goals of the GIT are to build a community of learning and faith among students and faculty; encounter contemporary biblical and theological approaches in intercultural and interreligious dimensions; explore multiple contextual perspectives; strengthen global networks of sharing and reflection.

Students and faculty will meet in the nation with the world's largest Muslim population, a country where Christians have lived in interreligious relations for generations. Yogyakarta



*The Global Institute of Theology is hosted by Duta Wacana Christian University in Yogyakarta, Indonesia.  
(Photo: Duta Wacana Christian University)*

is in the heartland of the rich and ancient Javanese cultural traditions that have influenced the expression of Christian faith. The GIT will be held in the midst of a society that has an emerging economy but where the deep division between poverty and wealth is a daily reality.

The GIT is intended for female and male students—up to 50 from all continents—preparing for Christian ministry at a theological seminary related to a WCRC member church and for pastors in their first years of ministry recommended by WCRC. The language of instruction will be English.

Applicants should have a particular interest in ecumenical theology and mission. Efforts will be made to select a student body and faculty that will reflect gender and regional balance and thus the diversity of the Reformed family in the world today.

The GIT will be coordinated by an international team responsible for all matters related to the curriculum, administration, and financial arrangements. The Institute is organized by WCRC's Office of Theology, Mission and Communion under the leadership of Douwe Visser.

Registration deadline: 1 December 2011 For information and to register see [www.wcrc.ch](http://www.wcrc.ch) or send a message to [wcrc@wcrc.ch](mailto:wcrc@wcrc.ch)

## Canadian Presbyterian named WCC Worship Consultant

By Connie Purvis

Canadian Andrew Donaldson, a musician and online columnist for the Presbyterian Record, the magazine of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, has been appointed worship consultant for the World Council of Churches (WCC).

The position will involve preparation and worship leadership in a number of areas including chapel services at WCC headquarters in Geneva and at international conferences.

"The idea is you think globally and you work locally and vice versa.



*Andrew Donaldson is the new WCC Worship Consultant.  
(Photo: David Kopulos)*

My job is to get people excited and

knowledgeable about ecumenical possibilities, then get them involved in practical ways. Leading worship, writing music, writing liturgies."

Donaldson's position is funded by the United Methodist Church (U.S.A.), but he says his Presbyterian background should serve him well.

"Presbyterians love dialogue and, as a Presbyterian, I'll be listening to different voices and trying to give them a place both in worship and planning meetings."

*Reprinted with permission from the Presbyterian Record*

**FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY**



Setri Nyomi,  
General Secretary

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**World  
Communion  
of Reformed  
Churches**

Called to  
communion,  
committed to  
justice

*Speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love. (Ep 4.15-16)*

The chapter in the book of Ephesians that gave the WCRC founding Uniting General Council its theme also gives many pointers for living out our calling as the body of Christ. In Ep 4.15-16 we are reminded how the different parts of the body when working well together lead towards building up the body of Christ.

This is echoed in how the Executive Committee of the WCRC in its meeting in May this year took a firm decision on a renewed way of working which emphasizes how all the parts of the WCRC work together. It places an emphasis on the role that regional councils have to play in implementing and facilitating the priorities of the Communion, as well as the need to network with all with whom we share vision and values. With a small staff in the Geneva Secretariat, the work of facilitating implementation would be impossible without every part of the WCRC family playing its part.

As I write this reflection, WCRC President, Jerry Pillay and I have attended the WCRC Europe Area Council meeting in Prague. I will have also attended the Latin American region (AIPRAL) assembly in Guatemala in August. In September I will participate in the Caribbean and North American region (CANAAC) assembly in the Dominican Republic in September. The President and I will then participate in an African region (CRCA) event in South Africa in October and Jerry Pillay will be at the North-East Asia region (NEAAC) meeting in November.

Jerry Pillay and I are committed to the renewed way of bringing the WCRC close to its owners, our member churches, through WCRC's regional councils. When that part of the WCRC is functioning properly it strengthens the whole. We are also exploring possibilities of creating regional councils for areas where they do not exist and doing so in conversation with other sister organizations – so that we are not simply duplicating structures in different parts of the world.

In the renewed way of working we emphasize empowering young people. It is our hope that our member churches do not take young people for granted. Taking them seriously strengthens the body of Christ. Therefore there should be space for our youth to bring their talents and their ways of doing things to enrich the church. It is our hope that all our member churches are creating that space for young people – male and female.

Let us continue to pray for one another as we face challenges. Visit the website [www.wcrc.ch](http://www.wcrc.ch) and get to know what we as a family are praying for and join in. Share your prayer items with us so that the rest of the family can also be praying along with you.

*Taking young people seriously strengthens the body of Christ*

**Prayers online**

Is your church in need of prayers? Is it concerned for the situation of churches in other parts of the world? The WCRC website has prayer resources for you.

WCRC member churches frequently submit requests for prayers that are posted to the website. Recent postings include prayers for Japan, the Republic of South Sudan and Tribal and Adivasi peoples in India. Each week as well you can connect with the Ecumenical Prayer Cycle of the World Council of Churches via WCRC's home page.

Visit [www.wcrc.ch](http://www.wcrc.ch) regularly for inspiration for prayer.